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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No. 371 Rs. 5/-

Mahabharata – 22

THE REUNION

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No. 371, December 15, 1986

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MAHABHARATA

Veda Vyasa's Epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself.

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya—great grandson of Vyasa—and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

The twenty-first session of our rendering of the Mahabharata described how Arjuna, at the behest of his father Indra, went to Indraloka in order to acquire celestial weapons. After receiving the weapons Arjuna spent the next five years in Indraloka perfecting the arts of singing, dancing and music. He also encountered Urvashi who in a fit of anger put a curse on him.

*

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Mahabharata – 22
THE REUNION

O HOLY ONE, AFTER ARJUNA'S DEPARTURE TO INDRALOKA HOW DID HIS BROTHERS AND DRAUPADI SPEND THEIR DAYS?

WITHOUT ARJUNA, O MONARCH, THEY WERE FILLED WITH SORROW.

"THEY CONTINUED TO LIVE IN THE KAMYAKA FOREST IN PROFOUND MELANCHOLY.

"DRAUPADI REMEMBERING ARJUNA, ONE DAY ADDRESSED YUDHISHTHIRA THUS—

IN ARJUNA'S ABSENCE THE EARTH SEEMS TO BE FORLORN. EVEN THIS FOREST WITH ITS BLOSSOMING TREES DOES NOT SEEM AS DELIGHTFUL AS BEFORE. IN HIS ABSENCE I CANNOT FEEL ANY HAPPINESS, O KING!

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Sri Vidyabharathi Sou... Peetham, Sringeri

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"RISHI NARADA, ACCEPTING THE WORSHIP, COMFORTED THE SONS OF PANDU. ADDRESSING YUDHISHTHIRA HE SAID —

TELL ME WHAT IS WORRYING YOU AND HOW I CAN HELP YOU.

IF MY BROTHERS AND I ARE WORTHY OF RECEIVING YOUR GRACE, TELL ME WHAT MERIT MAY BE EARNED BY GOING ON A PILGRIMAGE ROUND THE EARTH.

"THEN NARADA SAID —

O KING, THE WISE BHEESHMA ONCE PUT THE SAME QUERY TO THE GREAT RISHI PULASTYA, WHO HAD APPEARED BEFORE HIM...

... AND PULASTYA DESCRIBED TO HIM THE MERIT TO BE OBTAINED BY VISITING THE VARIOUS TEERTHAS*

SO, O MONARCH, NARADA RELATED TO THE PANDAVAS THE NAMES OF VARIOUS TEERTHAS THAT WERE TO BE VISITED.

"AND JUST BEFORE TAKING LEAVE OF THE FOUR PANDAVAS HE SAID —

THE GREAT RISHI LOMASHA WILL VISIT YOU SOON IN THE KAMYAKA FOREST. FOLLOW MY ADVICE AND VISIT THE PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE ALONG WITH HIM AND GREAT FAME WILL BE YOURS.

* PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE

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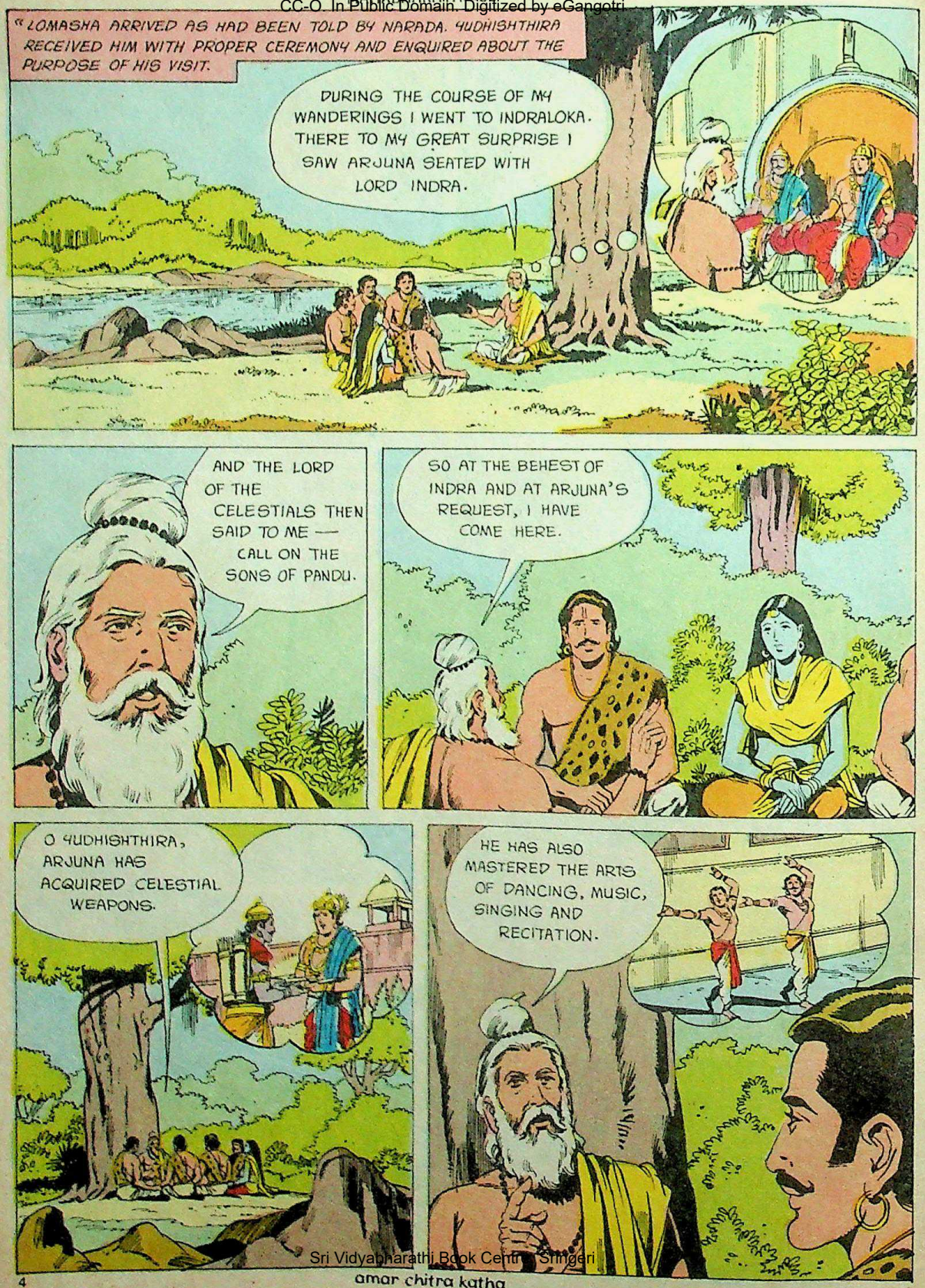

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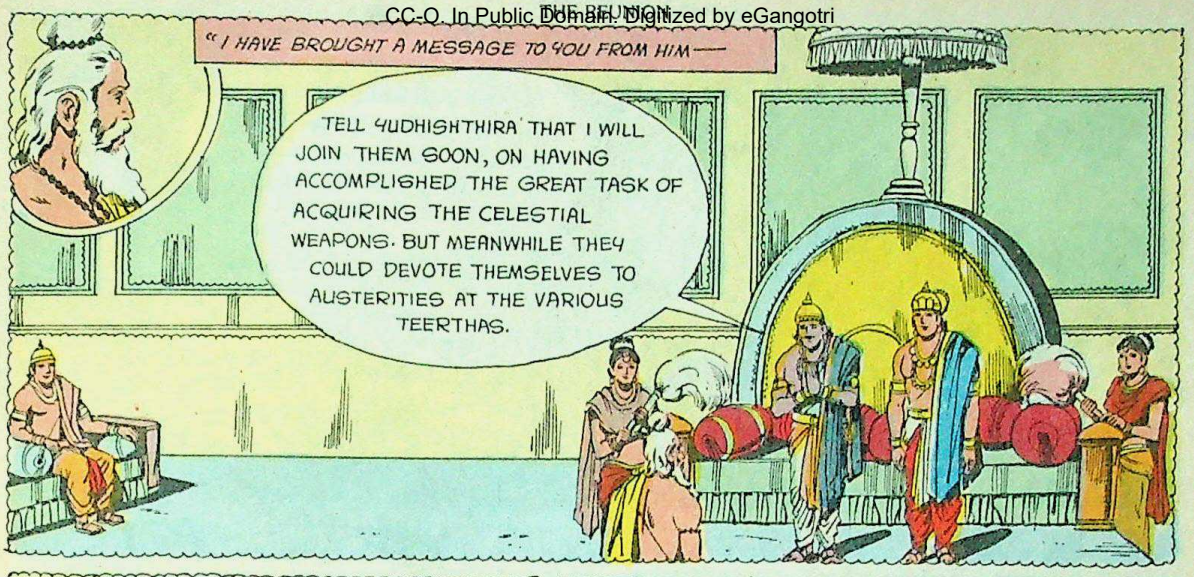

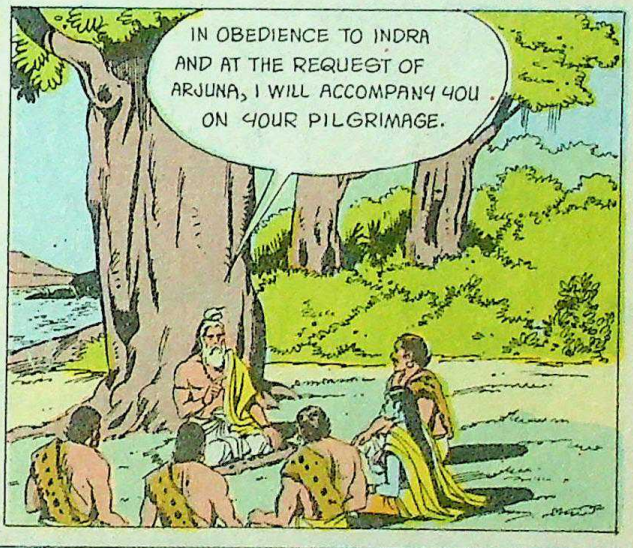

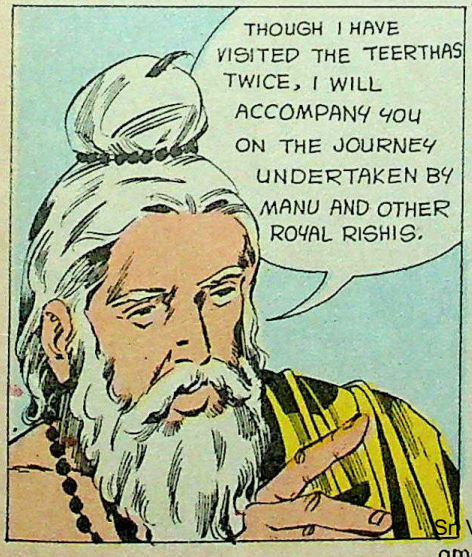

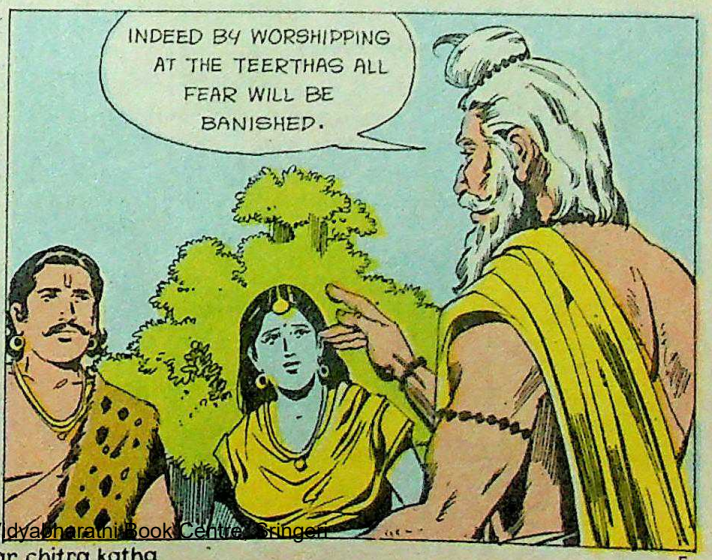

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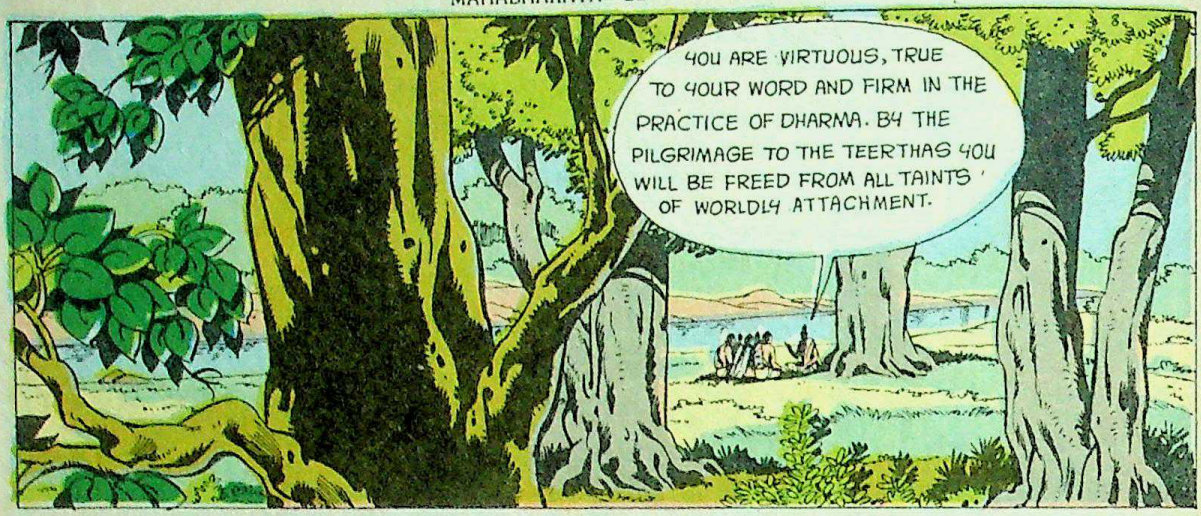

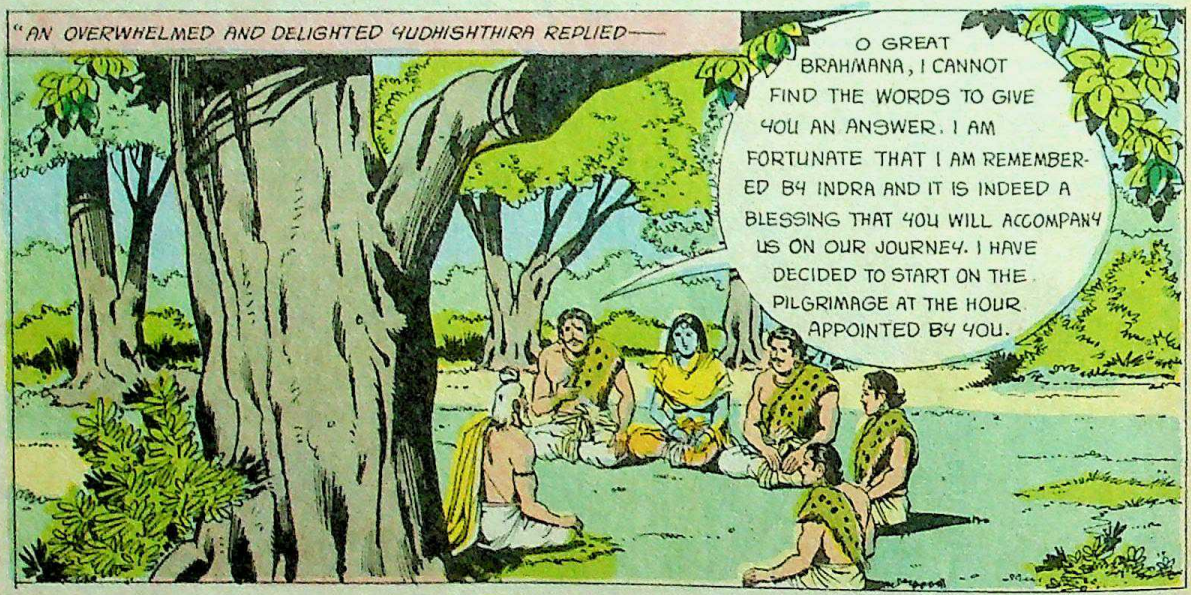

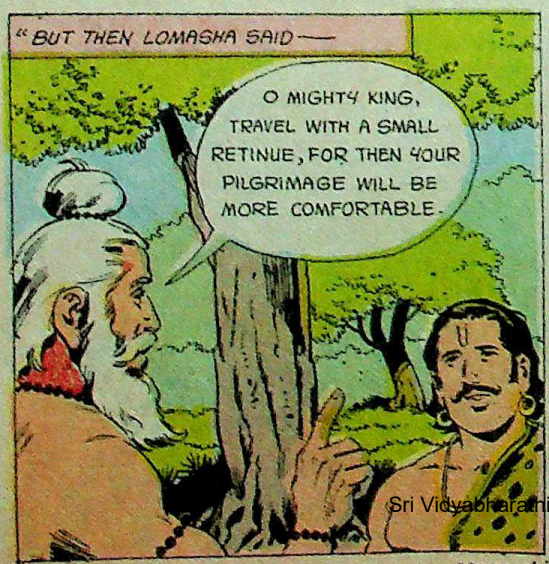

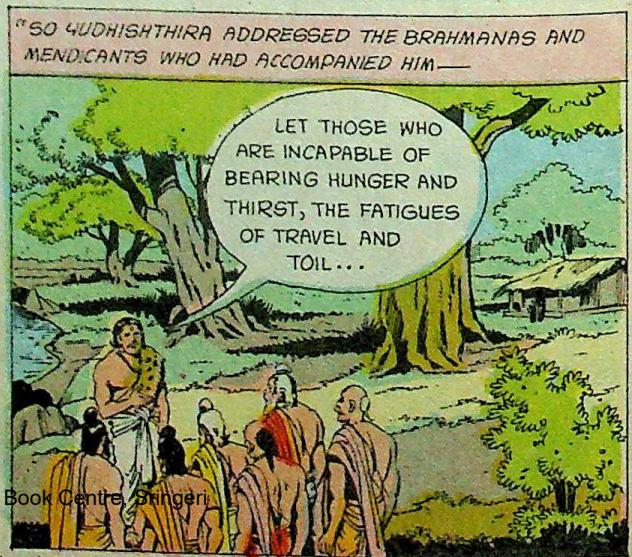

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...AND THE HARSHNESS OF WINTER, NOT EMBARK ON THIS PILGRIMAGE.

IT IS ONLY RIGHT, O KING, THAT YOU TAKE US WITH YOU. WITHOUT YOU WE SHALL NOT BE ABLE TO VISIT THE TEERTHAS AT ANY TIME.

"ADDRESSED THUS, YUDHISHTHIRA, WITH TEARS OF JOY IN HIS EYES, SAID TO THE ASCETICS —

SO BE IT.

"JUST THEN THERE ARRIVED IN THE KAMYAKA FOREST THE GREAT SAGES — VYASA, PARVATA AND NARADA. AFTER RECEIVING DUE WORSHIP FROM YUDHISHTHIRA THE SAGES SAID —

O PANDAVAS, PURIFY YOUR HEARTS AND THEN SET OUT FOR THE TEERTHAS.

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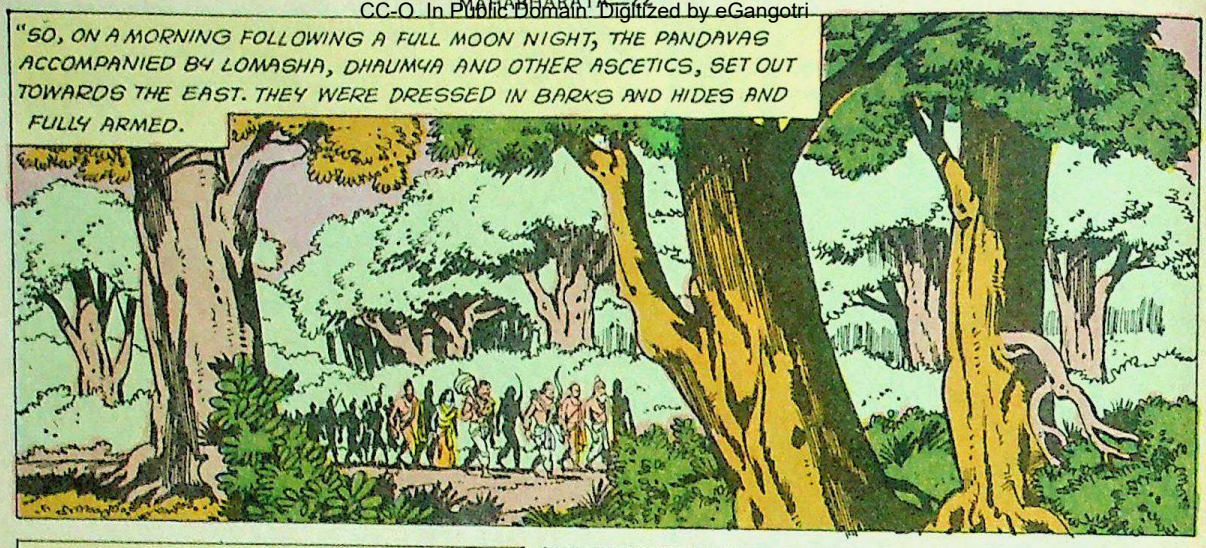

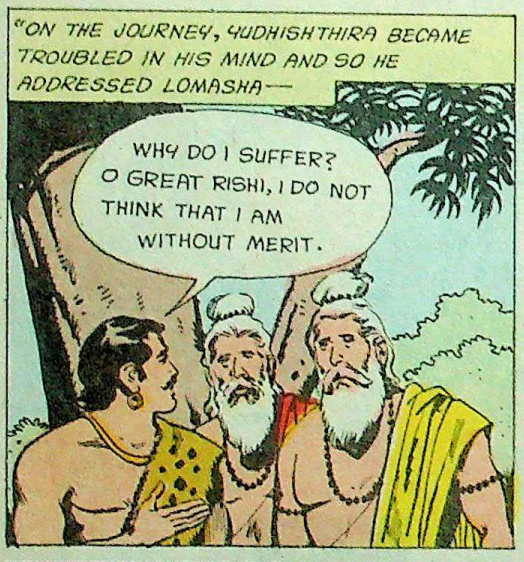

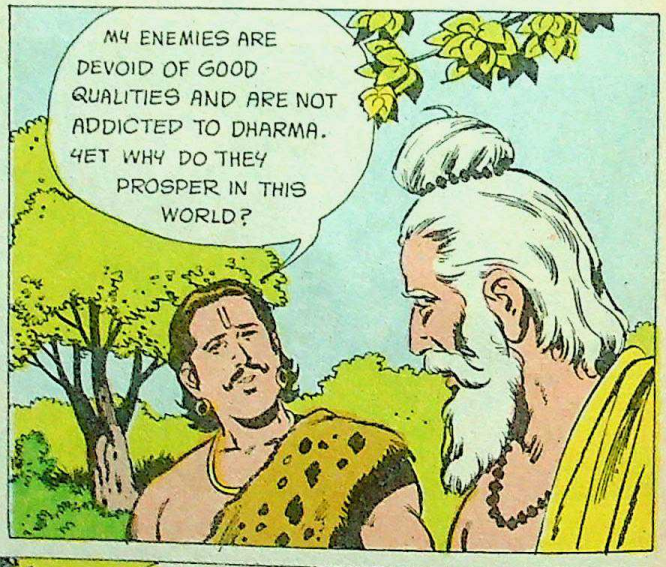

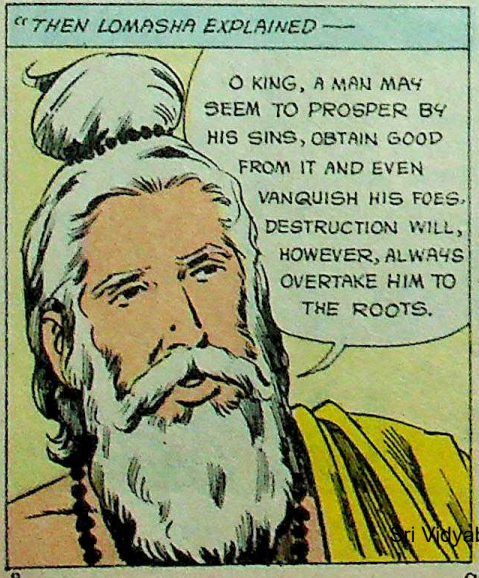

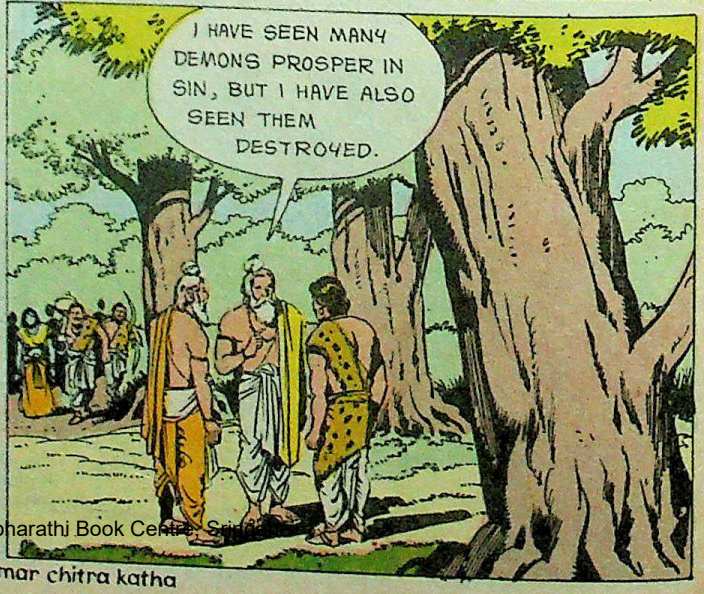

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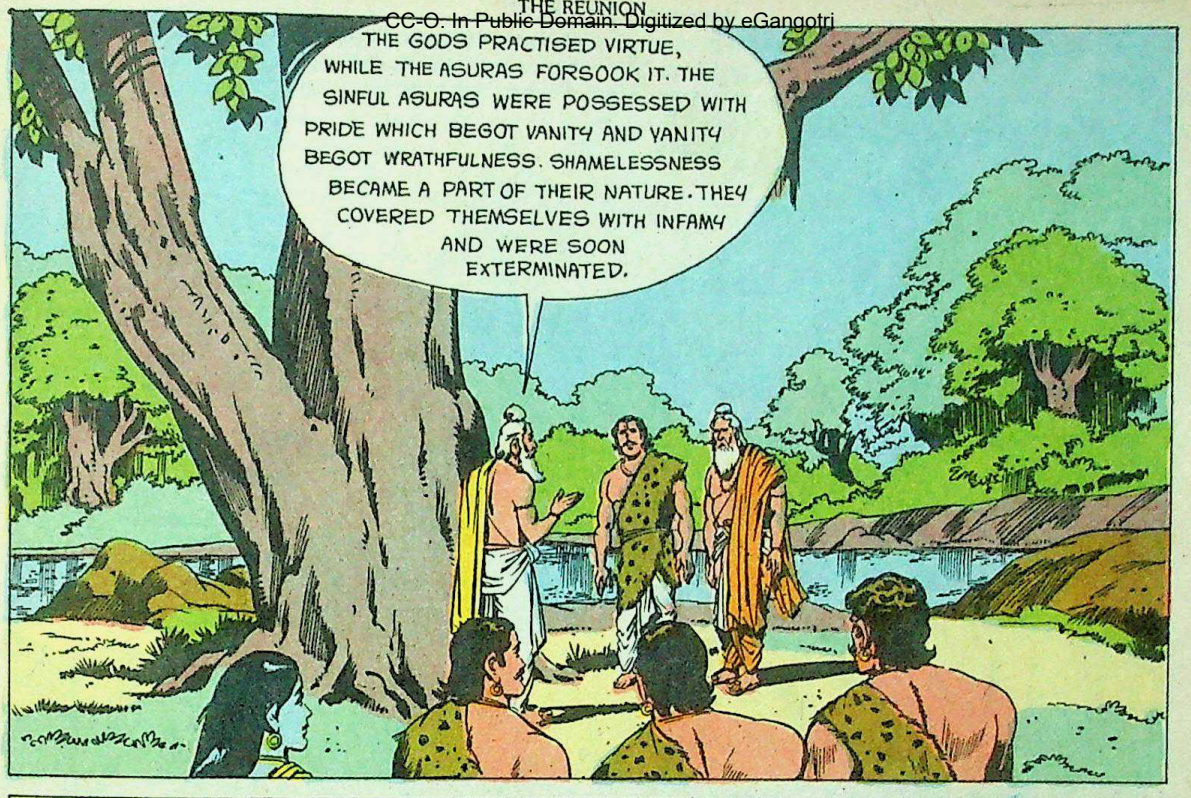

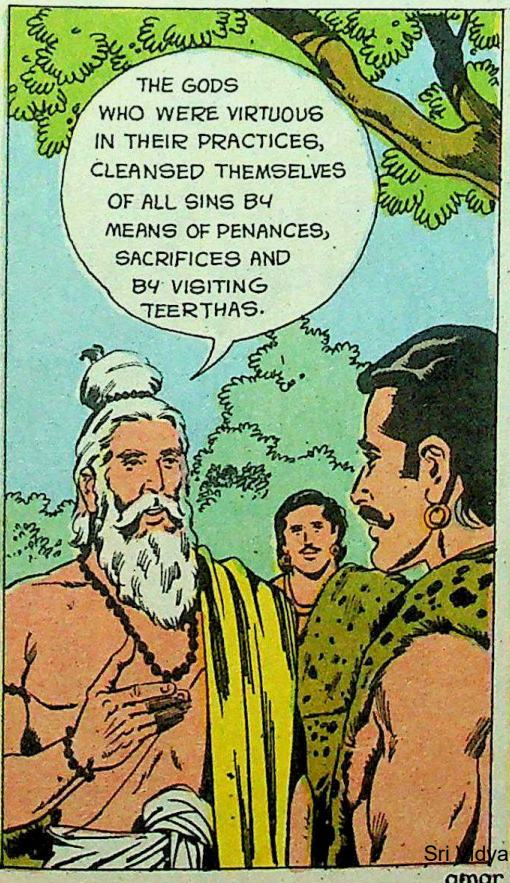

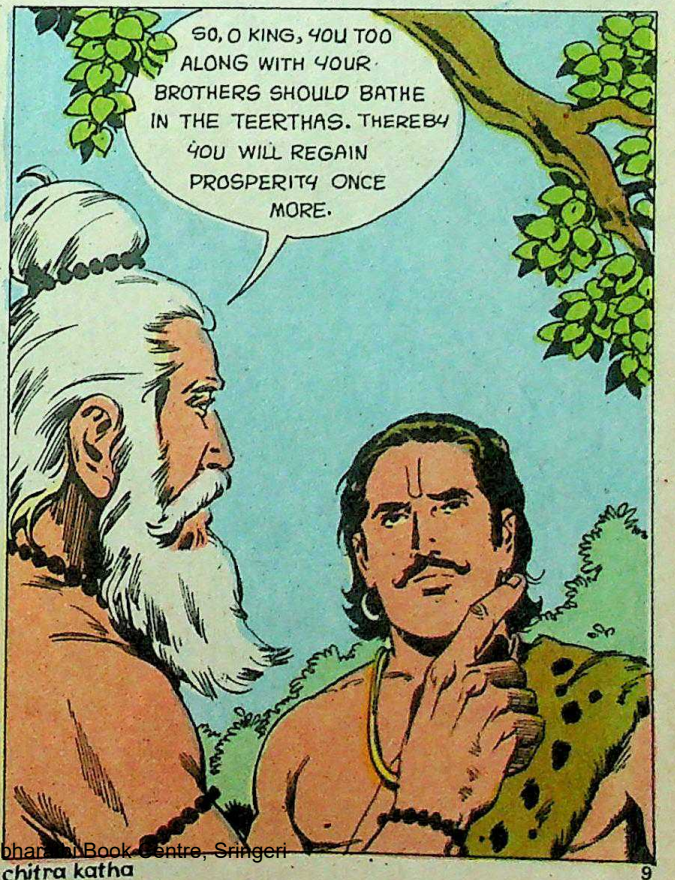

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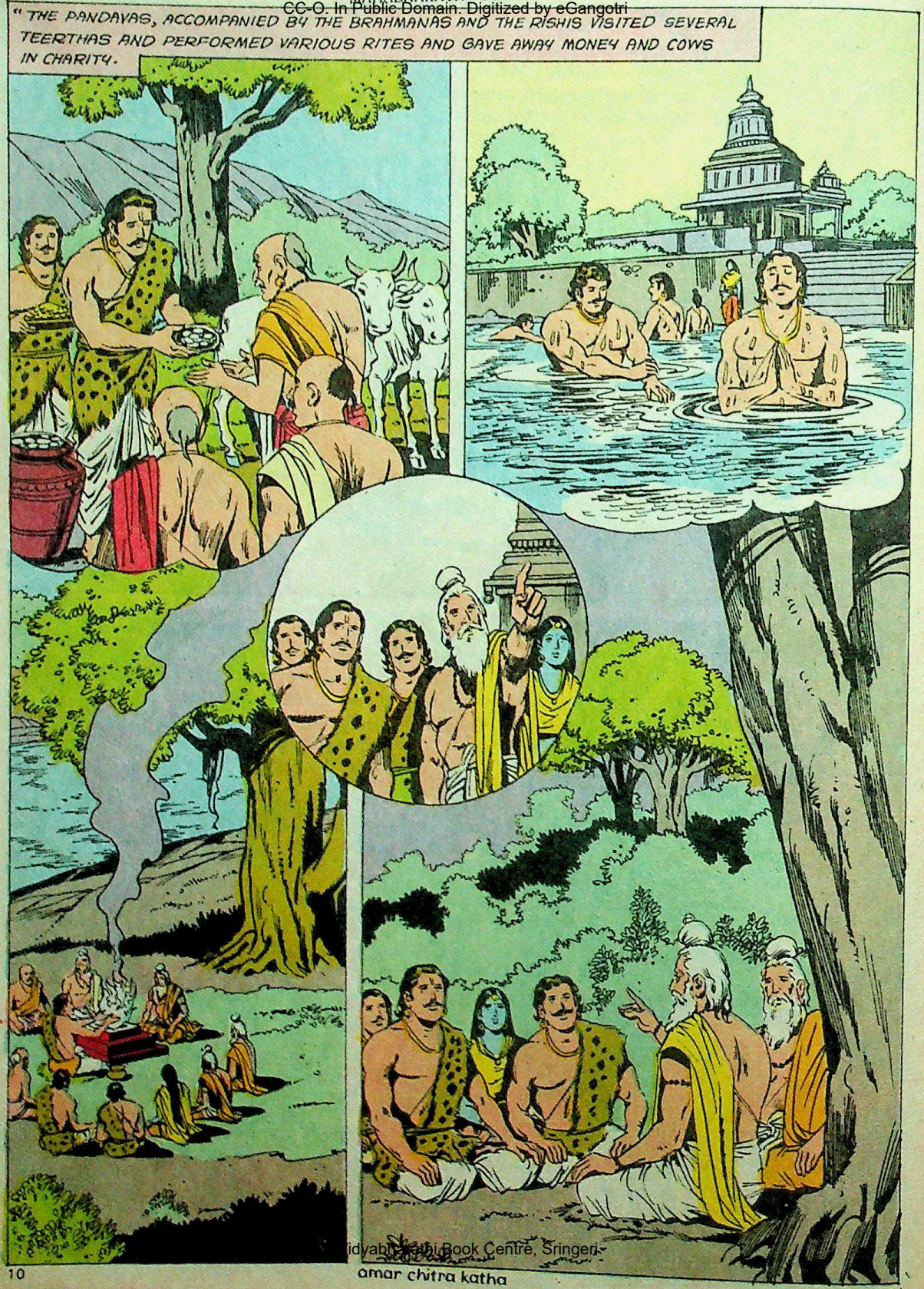

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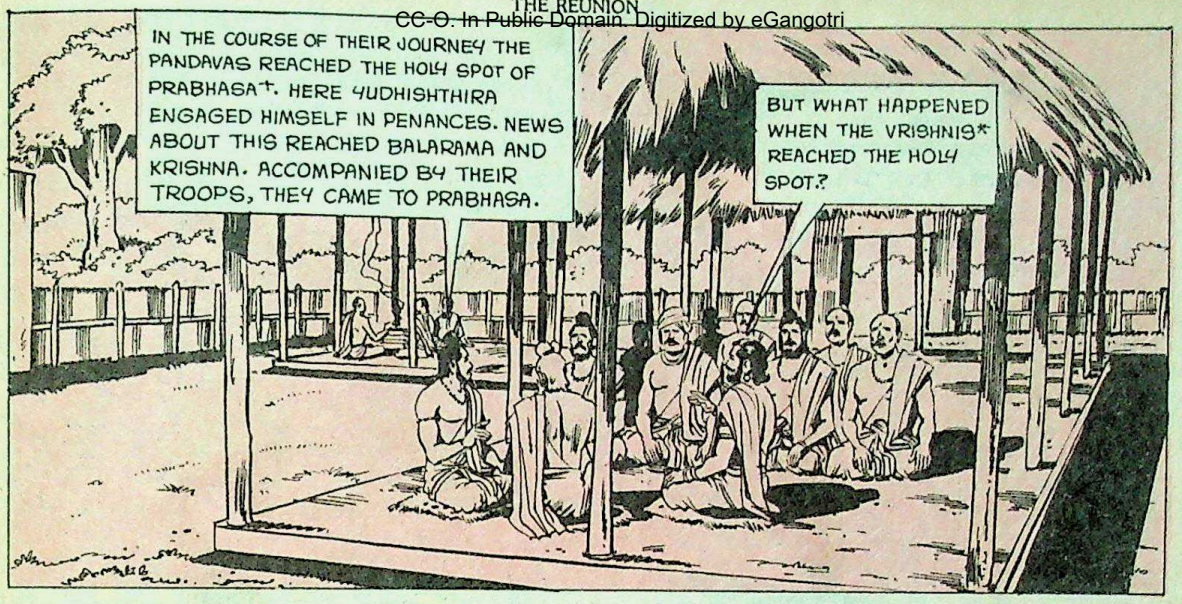

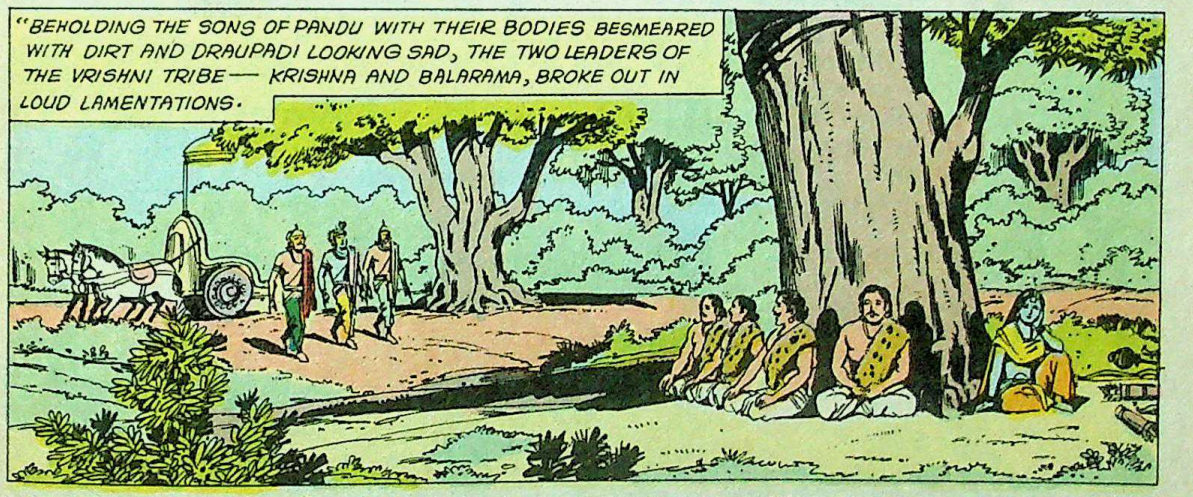

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+ NEAR DWARAKA * THE CLAN TO WHICH BALARAMA AND KRISHNA BELONGED.

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"THEN SATYAKI, ONE OF THE VRISHNIS SAID—

O BALARAMA, THIS IS NO TIME FOR LAMENTATION. LET US ACT ON OUR OWN AND DO WHAT IS PROPER. YUDHISHTHIRA IS NOT ONE WHO WILL SPEAK ABOUT HIS TROUBLES.

THOSE WHO HAVE PEOPLE TO LOOK AFTER THEIR WELFARE DO NOT UNDERTAKE ANYTHING THEMSELVES. SO IT IS UP TO US TO GO TO THE AID OF THE SONS OF PANDU.

SO LET THE SONS OF DHRITARASHTRA BE SWEPT AWAY BY THE VRISHNI FORCES AND BE SENT TO THE ABODE OF YAMA.

THEN LET ABHIMANYU* RULE THE WORLD TILL THE LARGE-HEARTED AND NOBLE YUDHISHTHIRA FULFILS HIS VOWS. AFTERWARDS THE EARTH WILL COME UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF YUDHISHTHIRA.

"BUT KRISHNA SAID—

O SATYAKI, YOU SPOKE WELL. BUT YUDHISHTHIRA WOULD NEVER ACCEPT EVEN THE OVERLORDSHIP OF THE WHOLE EARTH IF IT WAS NOT WON BY THE STRENGTH OF HIS OWN ARMS.

"THEN YUDHISHTHIRA INTERVENED AND SAID—

O SATYAKI, IT IS NOT STRANGE THAT YOU SPEAK THUS. BUT TO ME TRUTH IS THE FIRST CONSIDERATION, ABOVE THAT OF SOVEREIGN POWER ITSELF. AND THE TRUTH IS THAT I HAVE TO COMPLETE MY YEARS IN EXILE. WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR FEATS AND BRAVERY, KRISHNA WILL BE WITH US TO INFLICT DEFEAT ON THE ENEMY.

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* ARJUNA'S SON

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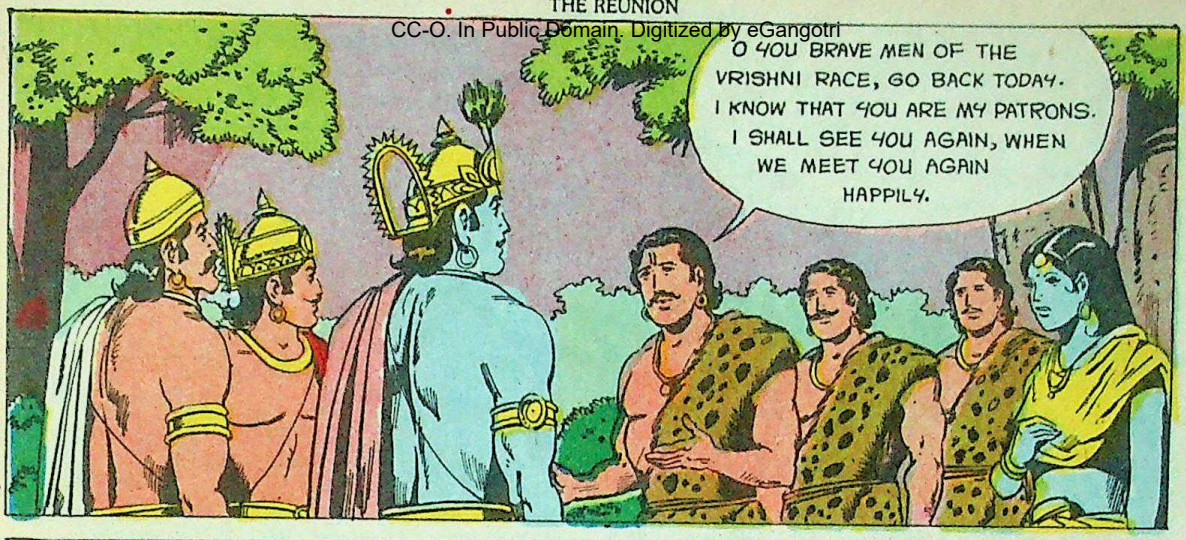
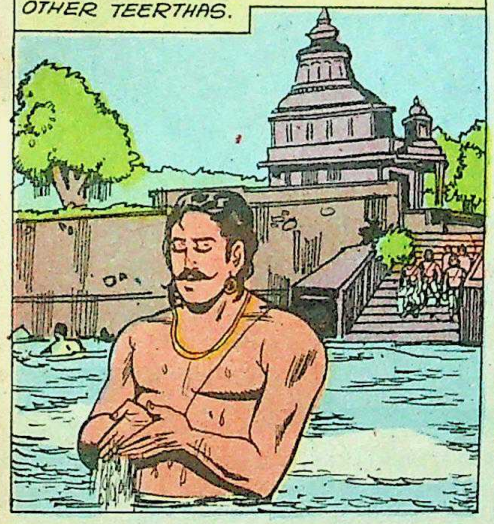
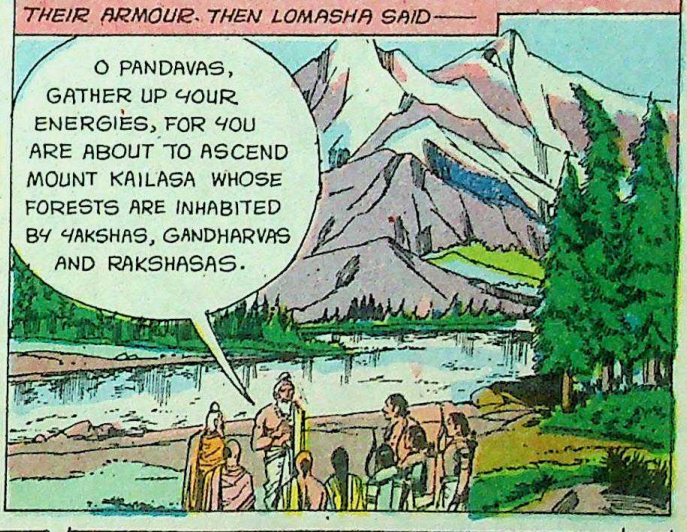


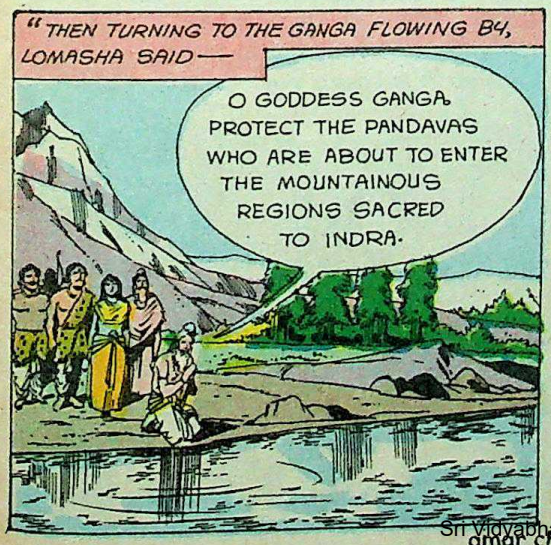
"AFTER LEAVING PRABHASA, THE PANDAVAS TRAVELLED TO VARIOUS OTHER TEERTHAS.



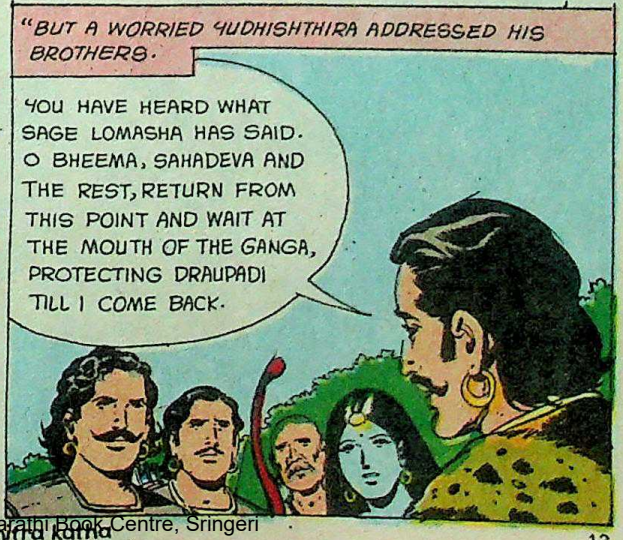
"THEY FINALLY ARRIVED IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE HOLY HIMALAYAS. EXCEPT YUDHISHTHIRA, THE OTHERS DONNED THEIR ARMOUR. THEN LOMASHA SAID——



"THEN TURNING TO THE GANGA FLOWING BY, LOMASHA SAID——



"BUT A WORRIED YUDHISHTHIRA ADDRESSED HIS BROTHERS.



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SAGE LOMASHA AND I WILL PROCEED, SUBSISTING ON WHATEVER MEAGRE FOOD IS AVAILABLE AND OBSERVING OUR VOWS.

BUT THE BROTHERS AND DRAUPADI DID NOT HEED HIS ADVICE, THEY ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE RETINUE WENT AHEAD ON THE MOUNTAINOUS TRAIL.

"AS THEY WALKED TOWARDS THE GANDHAMADANA FORESTS, DRAUPADI WHO WAS UNACCUSTOMED TO TRAVEL ON FOOT, FALTERED

HELP! HELP!

"NAKULA, WHO WAS BEHIND HER, RAN FORWARD.

DRAUPADI!

"YUDHISHTHIRA PLACED DRAUPADI'S HEAD IN HIS LAP AND LAMENTED —

OH WHAT HAVE I DONE! IT IS BECAUSE OF ME THAT THESE DELICATE FEET HAVE HAD TO SUFFER THE PAINS OF THIS JOURNEY. THE FOOL THAT I AM, MY ADDICTION TO DICE HAS BROUGHT ALL OF US TO THIS SORRY PREDICAMENT.

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O BHEEMA, WE HAVE GREATER PERILS AHEAD, ON OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE SNOW-BOUND MOUNTAINS. HOW WILL DRAUPADI WITHSTAND THE HARDSHIPS OF THE ASCENT?

"AS YUDHISHTHIRA WONDERED WHAT TO DO, BHEEMA'S FACE SUDDENLY LIGHTED UP.

GHATOTKACHA*! GHATOTKACHA WILL CARRY HER. I HAVE ONLY TO THINK OF HIM AND HE WILL BE HERE.

"BHEEMA CLOSED HIS EYES AND THOUGHT OF GHATOTKACHA AND...

"...IN A FARAWAY FOREST GHATOTKACHA SUDDENLY STOOD STILL.

MY FATHER NEEDS ME. COME WITH ME.

"THE NEXT MOMENT—

FATHER, HERE I AM, READY TO DO YOUR BIDDING.

GHATOTKACHA, YOU CAN FLY ANYWHERE AT WILL. CARRY DRAUPADI AND FOLLOW US TO THE GANDHAMADANA FOREST. BUT FLY LOW SO THAT SHE DOES NOT BECOME ILL.

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* SON OF BHEEMA AND HIDIMBA, A DEMONESS — SEE MAHABHARATA VOL NO. 9

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SHE WILL HAVE NO REASON TO FEEL UNEASY, FOR ALL OF YOU WILL BE WITH HER. MY ATTENDANTS WILL CARRY YOU.

"CARRIED SWIFTLY BY THE BENIGN RAKSHASAS THE PANDAVAS COVERED MUCH DISTANCE...

"...TILL ONE DAY THEY REACHED THE HERMITAGE OF NARA AND NARAYANA.

"THE INHABITANTS OF THE PLACE RECEIVED THE PANDAVAS WITH HONOUR.

WELCOME TO OUR HERMITAGE, VIRTUOUS ONES!

"THE PANDAVAS DWELT THERE FOR SOME TIME IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THEY MAY GET TO SEE ARJUNA. THEN ONE DAY AS DRAUPADI AND BHEEMA WERE WALKING IN THE BEAUTIFUL FOREST HERMITAGE——

BHEEMA, LOOK AT THIS EXQUISITE FLOWER!

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I WILL MAKE A PRESENT OF THIS TO YUDHISHTHIRA. BUT, DEAR BHEEMA, I MUST HAVE A FEW OF THESE FLOWERS TO TAKE BACK WITH US TO THE KAMYAKA FOREST.

"SO BHEEMA, TAKING HIS BOW AND ARROWS AND MACE, SET OUT TO GRATIFY HER WISH. HE ENTERED THE GANDHAMADANA FOREST, FULL OF BEAUTIFUL TREES, ANIMALS, BIRDS AND STREAMS.

I HOPE MY BROTHERS DON'T GET ANXIOUS FOR ME.

"AS HE HURRIED THROUGH THE FOREST THE ANIMALS FLED IN FEAR AND THE BIRDS FLEW TO SAFETY.

"BUT HE WAS SUDDENLY BROUGHT TO A HALT WHEN HE SAW A MONKEY WITH A LONG TAIL LYING ON THE GROUND BLOCKING HIS WAY.*

"HE WENT A LITTLE CLOSER AND LET OUT A ROAR.

GR-R-R-R!

"THE MONKEY SIMPLY TURNED AND LOOKED LAZILY AT BHEEMA.

I AM ILL. I WAS ASLEEP AND YOU WOKE ME UP. BEING A MAN, YOU ARE WISER THAN I. YOU OUGHT TO BE MORE CONSIDERATE. WHO ARE YOU?

* SEE A.C.K NO 214 FOR DETAILS

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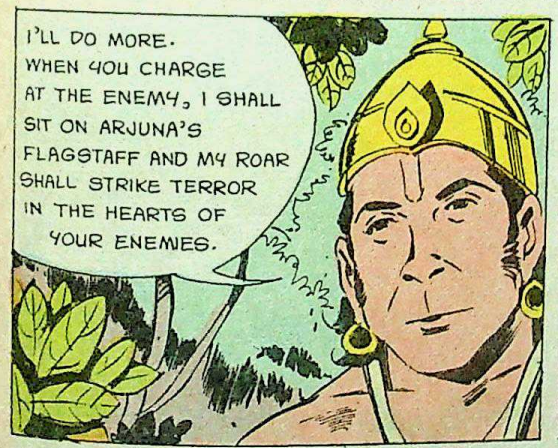

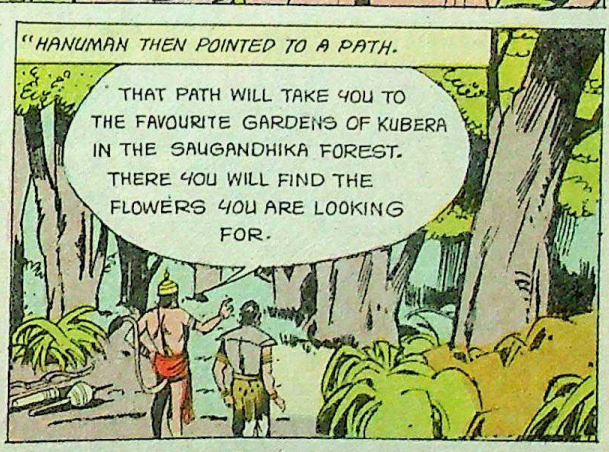

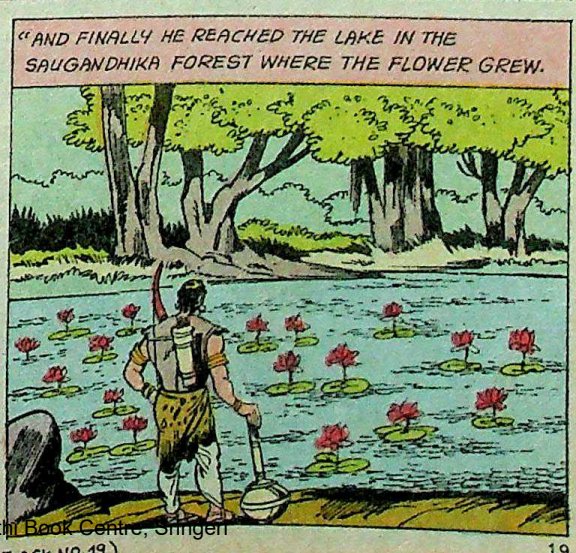

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* HANUMAN WAS THE SON OF VAYU, THE WIND-GOD. (SEE ACK NO. 19)

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* LORD OF THE DEMIGODS: SEE ACK NO-67

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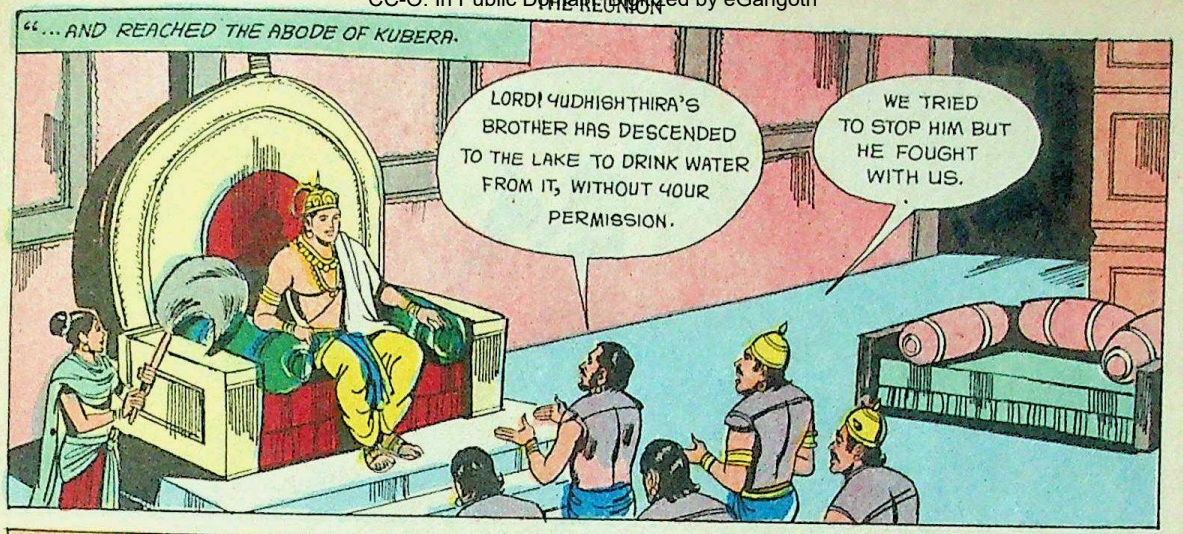

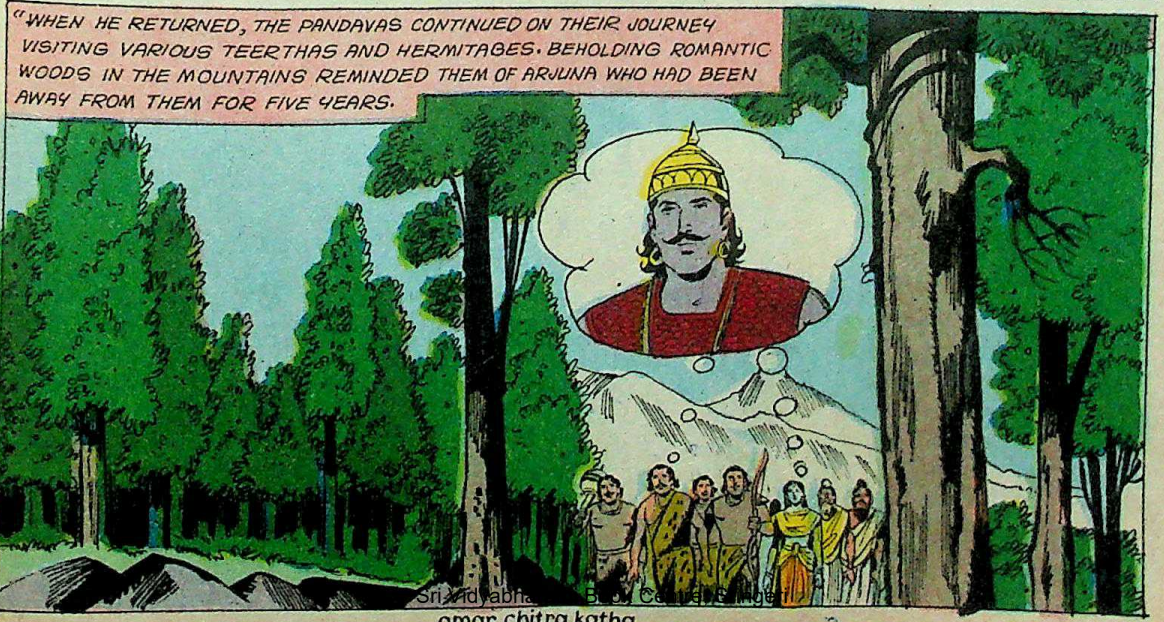

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"ONE DAY THE PANDAVAS SUDDENLY SAW A BRIGHT OBJECT ILLUMINATING THE SKY AND...

...SOON INDRA'S VEHICLE DRAWN BY A HUNDRED HORSES APPEARED IN FRONT OF THEM.

"SEATED IN THE CHARIOT DRIVEN BY MATALI WAS ARJUNA DECKED IN GARLANDS AND ORNAMENTS.

"HE ALIGHTED AND BOWED TO HIS ELDERS. AND THERE WAS MUCH REJOICING AMONG THE BROTHERS.

"AFTER MATALI HAD LEFT, ARJUNA PRESENTED TO DRAUPADI THE PRECIOUS GEMS AND ORNAMENTS THAT INDRA HAD GIVEN HIM.

"INDRA THEN DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN AND BLESSED YUDHISHTHIRA.

ONE DAY YOU WILL RULE THE EARTH.

Sri Sharada Bharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

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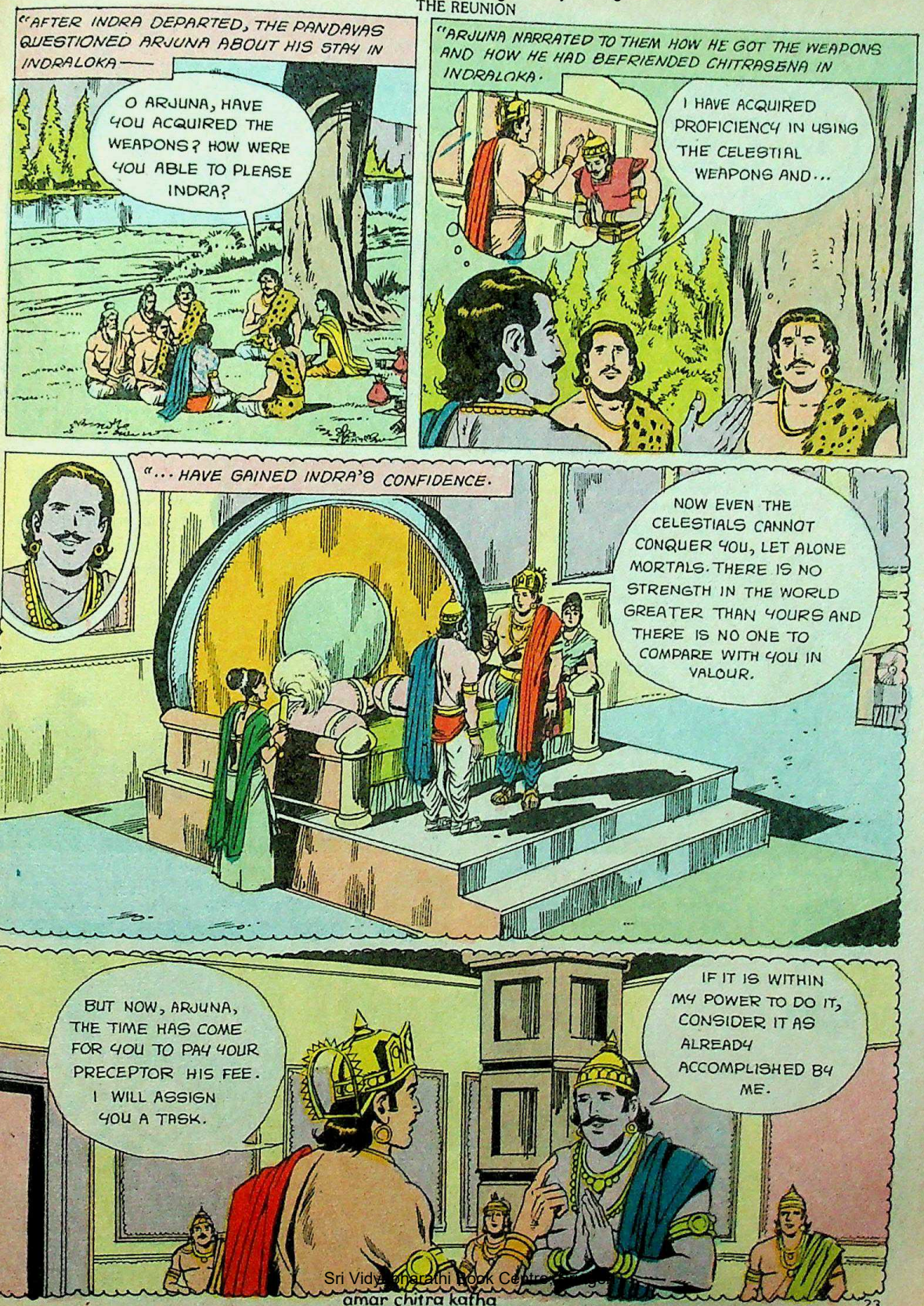

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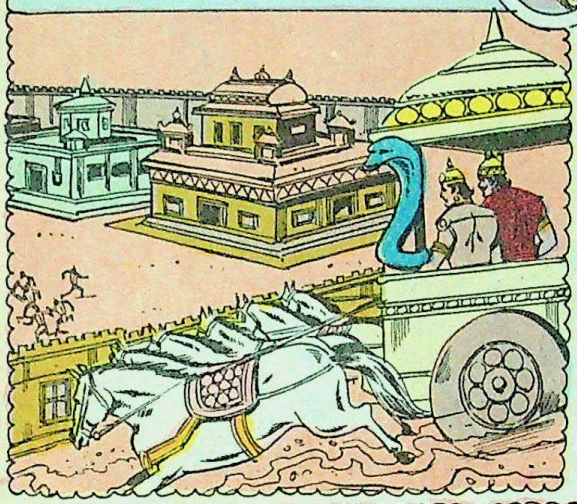
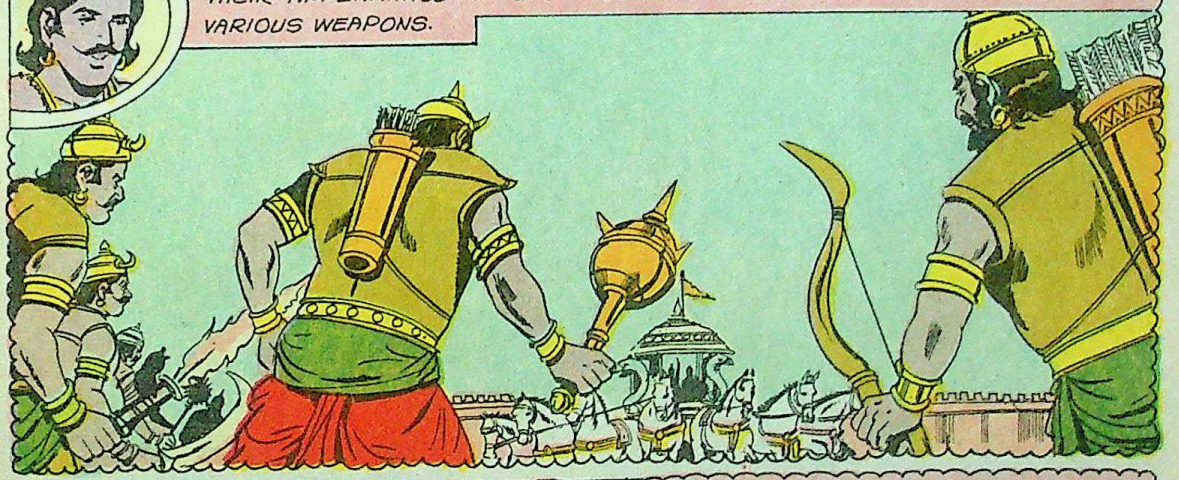
"TAKING ME TO BE INDRA, THE DANAVAS TOOK FRIGHT. THEY SHUT THE GATES OF THE CITY AND BEGAN TO ARM THEMSELVES.

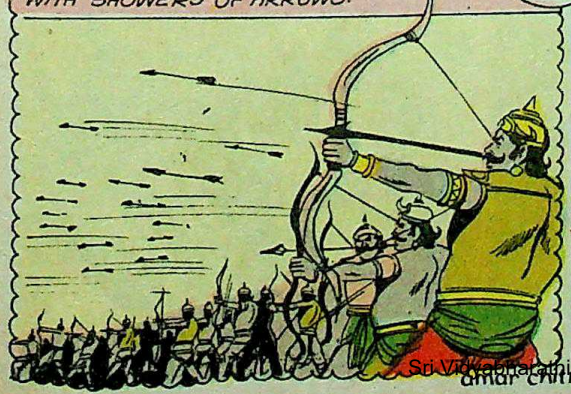


THEREUPON I BLEW THE POWERFUL CONCH-SHELL — DEVADATTA — AND THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE REVERBERATIONS OF ITS SOUND.

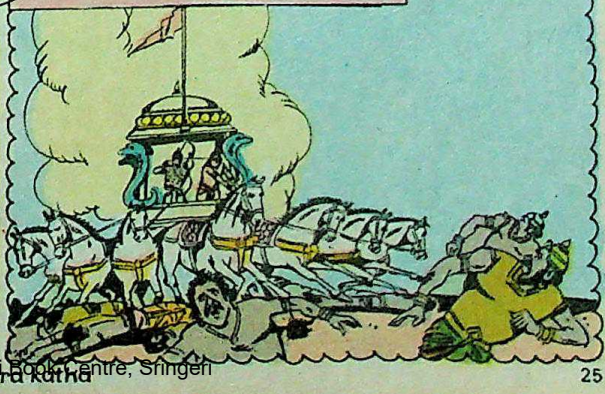
THEN O YUDHISHTHIRA, MATALI LANDED THE CHARIOT AND THE DANAVAS MADE THEIR APPEARANCE IN THEIR THOUSANDS, DONNING DIVERSE MAIL AND CARRYING VARIOUS WEAPONS.



"THEY RUSHED AT US. OBSTRUCTING THE COURSE OF THE VEHICLE, HEMMING US ON ALL SIDES, THEY COVERED US WITH SHOWERS OF ARROWS.



"AIMING MY GANDEEVA I SHOT OUT ARROWS IN ALL DIRECTIONS. AND AS THE DANAVAS WERE DRIVEN BACK, MATALI SPED THE STEEDS, WHO TRAMPLED ON THE DEMONS.



Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Shingeri

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THEN I SEIZED INDRA'S FAVOURITE WEAPON— MADHAVA, AND HURLED IT AT THE DANAVA FORCE AND THEIR WEAPONS WERE REDUCED TO SMITHEREENS. THE NIVATAKAVACHAS RESORTED TO THEIR TRICKS OF ILLUSION IN THEIR FIGHT WITH ME.

SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A MIGHTY SHOWER OF ROCKS. BUT I CRUSHED THE ROCKS TO POWDER WITH THE HELP OF INDRA'S WEAPON.

"AND THEN WATER CAME DOWN IN HUGE TORRENTS WHICH I DRIED UP WITH THE HELP OF THE DREADFUL AND FLAMING VISHOSHANA.

"THE DANAVAS CREATED THE ILLUSION OF FIRE AND WIND AND I EXTINGUISHED THE FLAMES USING AQUEOUS APPLIANCES.

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

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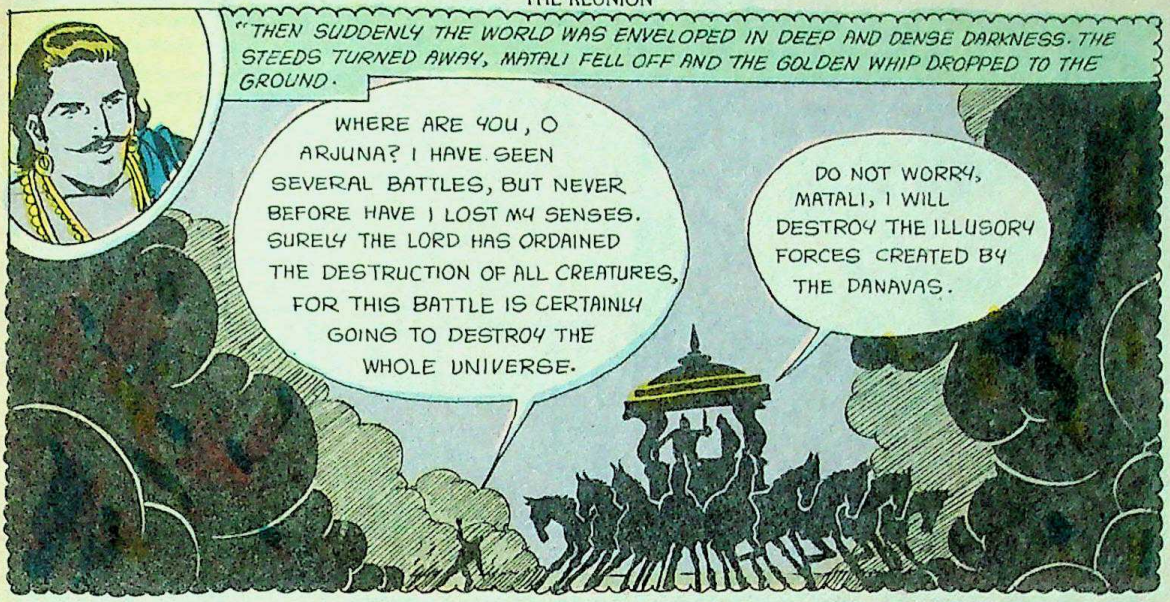

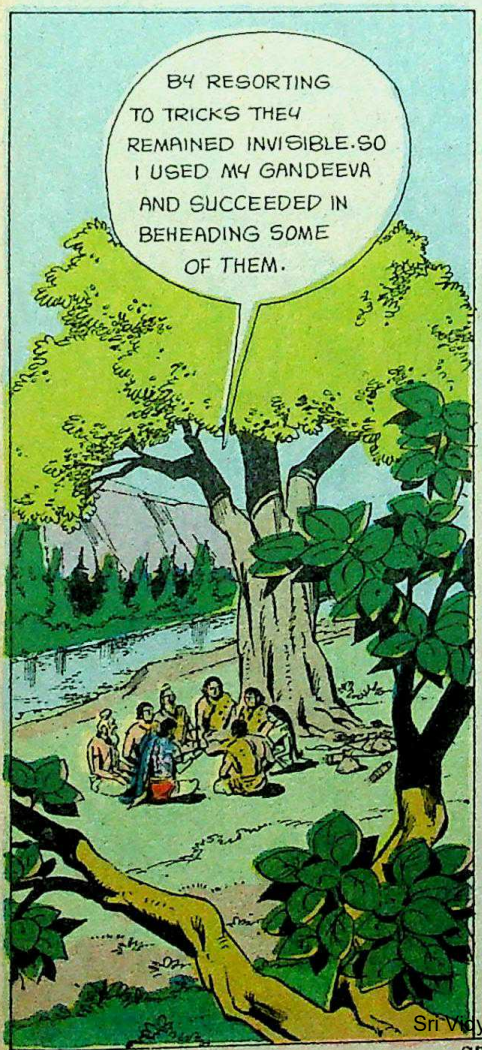

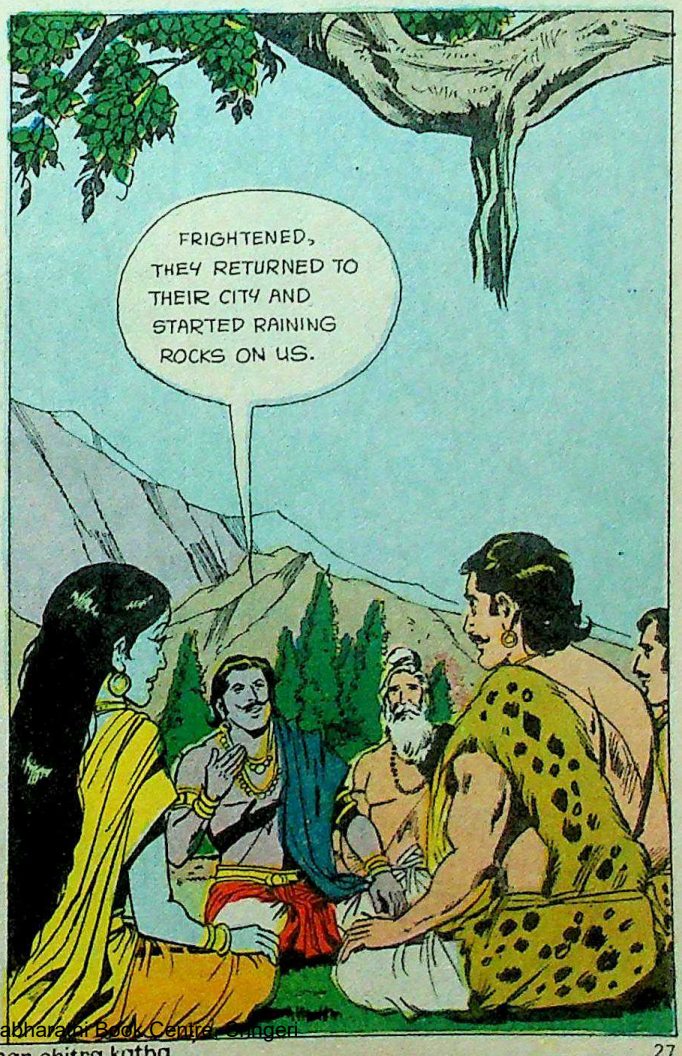

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I FELT DISTRESSED. SEEING ME IN THIS STATE, MATALI SAID—

O ARJUNA, DO NOT BE AFRAID. USE THE POWERFUL THUNDERBOLT.*

"INSPIRED BY THIS, I RELEASED THE VAJRA — THE FAVOURITE WEAPON OF INDRA. THE VAJRA BROKE THE SPELL OF THE DANAVAS AND CAUSED THE DESTRUCTION OF THEM ALL.

O ARJUNA, NOT EVEN AMONG THE CELESTIALS CAN ONE SEE THE PROWESS THAT ONE SEES IN YOU.

AFTER DEFEATING THE NIVATAKAVACHAS, WE WERE RETURNING TO INDRALOKA, WHEN I SAW AN UNEARTHLY AERIAL CITY, COURSING ALONG AT WILL. MATALI EXPLAINED TO ME THAT IT WAS INHABITED BY DANAVAS...

...WHOM THE GODS WERE INCAPABLE OF DESTROYING. BRAHMA HAD DESTINED THEIR DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF MORTALS.

IN THE FIGHT THAT ENSUED, I USED THE POWERFUL PASHUPATA WEAPON GIVEN TO ME BY SHIVA.

* VAJRA, INDRA'S WEAPON

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AS I DISCHARGED THE WEAPON, THOUSANDS OF STRANGE BEINGS APPEARED WIELDING WEAPONS.

THESE BEINGS FOUGHT A FEROCIOUS BATTLE WITH THE DANAVAS, ANNIHILATING THEM COMPLETELY.

ON OUR RETURN TO INDRALOKA, INDRA WAS VERY PLEASED —

WELL DONE! WELL DONE!

EVEN THE CELESTIALS CHEERED ME AND INDRA SAID —

BY THIS FEAT YOU HAVE PAID THE FEE YOU OWE THE PRECEPTOR. YOU HAVE NOW BECOME INVINCIBLE TO CELESTIALS AND DEMONS ALIKE.

ALL THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS, O ARJUNA, ARE WITH YOU, SO NO MAN ON EARTH CAN OVERPOWER YOU. AND WHEN YOU ARE ON THE FIELD BHEESHMA AND DRONA AND KRIPA AND KARNA AND SHAKUNI TOGETHER WITH OTHER KSHATRIYAS SHALL NOT AMOUNT TO A ONE-SIXTEENTH PART OF YOU.

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"HE GRANTED ME HIS IMPENETRABLE CELESTIAL MAIL. HE ALSO SET A DIADEM ON MY HEAD AND FINALLY PRESENTED ME WITH ELEGANT APPARELS AND RARE ORNAMENTS.

"THEN HE SAID —

O ARJUNA, THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO LEAVE. YOUR BROTHERS ARE ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR YOU TO RETURN.

SO, O YUDHISHTHIRA, HAVE I SPENT THE LAST FIVE YEARS AND HAVE NOW ARRIVED AT THE GANDHAMADANA TO BEHOLD YOU AND MY OTHER BROTHERS.

O ARJUNA, IT IS FORTUNATE INDEED THAT YOU HAVE ACQUIRED THE WEAPONS AND ALSO THE APPRECIATION OF INDRA. TODAY I FEEL THAT WE HAVE CONQUERED ALL THE CITIES AND SUBDUED THE SONS OF DHRITARASHTRA. BUT ARJUNA, I AM CURIOUS TO BEHOLD THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS.

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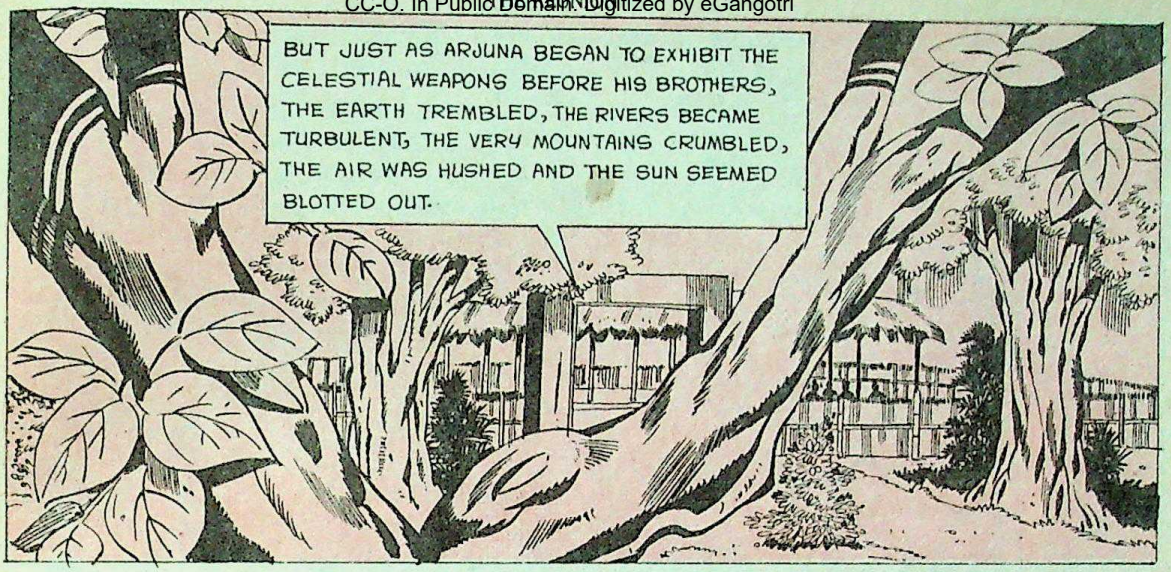

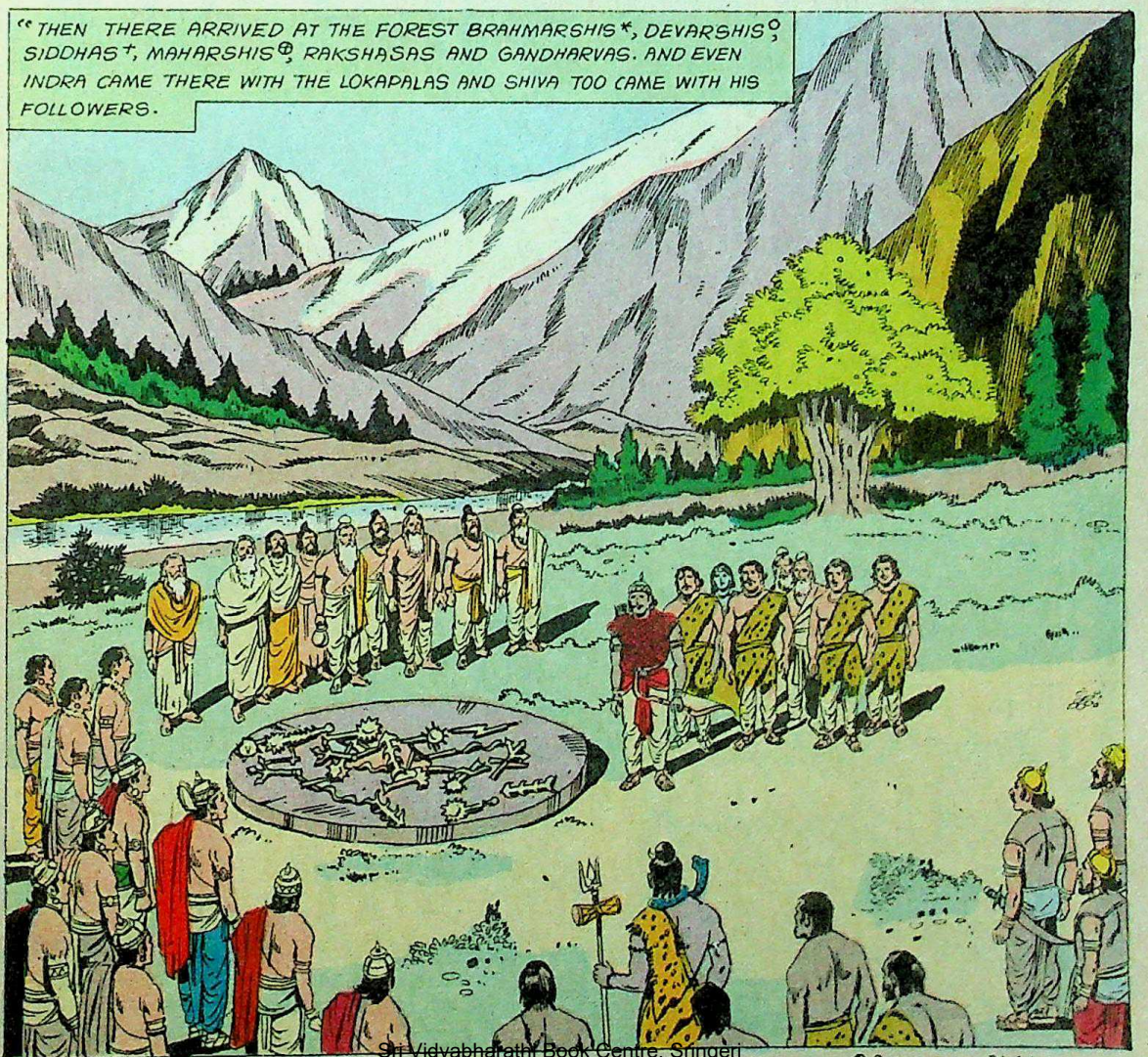

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*Most venerated Rishis °Priests of the Gods +Pure and holy beings ⊕ Seven great Rishis

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"AND THEN NARADA APPEARED BEFORE THE PANDAVAS AS A CELESTIAL MESSENGER.

O ARJUNA, DO NOT DISCHARGE THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS WITHOUT REASON, FOR TO DO SO IS EVIL. EVEN WHEN USED, IT SHOULD BE FOR A GOOD CAUSE AND IN TIMES OF GREAT STRESS AND NEED.

IF THESE WEAPONS ARE NOT USED IN THE RIGHT MANNER, IT COULD CAUSE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE THREE WORLDS. SO DO NOT DEMONSTRATE THE POWER OF THE WEAPONS. WHEN THERE IS A WAR YOU WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO.

AFTER ARJUNA WAS DISSUADED FROM A DEMONSTRATION OF THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS, THE CELESTIALS AND OTHERS RETURNED TO THEIR ABODES AND THE PANDAVAS BEGAN TO DWELL CONTENTEDLY IN THE GANDHAMADANA FOREST, ALONG WITH DRAUPADI.

THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

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"PAPA, WILL YOU HOLD ME, WHEN I SLIDE DOWN?"

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